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Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/159, provides information on the extent to which intergovernmental bodies paid attention to gender perspectives. As requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/9, the report also contains an assessment of the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women on discussions within the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/159, requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to the Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, with an assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations on further measures to enhance implementation. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/9, requested the Secretary-General to include in the present report an assessment of the impact of the Commission on the Status of Women's input to discussions within the United Nations system.

2. The present report responds to those mandates by providing an overview of steps taken by intergovernmental bodies[1] to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, including the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, as well as in the work of their subsidiary bodies. It reviews the extent to which reports before, and outcomes of, the intergovernmental bodies have taken gender perspectives into account and made specific recommendations for action.

II. Attention to gender equality in intergovernmental processes

3. In 2008, Member States reaffirmed the primary and essential role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the central role of the Commission on the Status of Women, in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality, and underlined their role in promoting and monitoring gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 63/159, paras. 19 and 21).

4. The General Assembly resolved to intensify the efforts of its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies to mainstream a gender perspective in their work, including by paying more attention to issues related to the status of women under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and their follow-up processes. The Assembly encouraged its subsidiary bodies to incorporate gender-equality perspectives in their discussions and outcomes and requested that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly facilitate gender-sensitive policy development by more systematically including qualitative gender analysis, data and recommendations.

5. The Assembly also requested the Economic and Social Council to continue to encourage its functional commissions to mainstream a gender perspective in their respective follow-up actions to major United Nations conferences and summits and to develop more effective means to ensure the implementation of outcomes on gender equality at the national level, including through increased consultations with the Commission on the Status of Women (resolution 63/159, para. 20).

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[1] Reports on gender mainstreaming are also submitted to the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. The report to the Council focuses on the work of United Nations entities and the report to the Commission focuses on Member State initiatives.

A. General Assembly

6. The present section provides examples of how gender equality and the empowerment of women were addressed during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, including in selected high-level events, as well as in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

7. The analysis carried out in preparation for the present report[2] indicated that documentation before and outcomes of the Second and Third Committees and the plenary contained significantly more information on gender perspectives than documentation and outcomes of the First, Fourth and Sixth Committees. In the Fifth Committee, several budget and performance-related reports contained information on efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, notably in peacekeeping operations. Some progress was observed in gender-sensitive outcomes at the sixty-third session, compared to the sixty-second session of the Assembly. An estimated 30 per cent of resolutions contained references to gender-equality issues, albeit with differing degrees of substantive content. Approximately 54 per cent of the reports before the Assembly included some references to gender-equality issues, ranging from general statements to more in-depth analysis.

8. While many reports and resolutions expressed general commitments to gender-equality goals, fewer contained specific data and recommendations to guide and monitor implementation. A positive finding was that the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies in a number of agenda items called for increased measures to eliminate violence against women. Considerable attention was also given to gender-equality issues in relation to decent work for all and peace, security and humanitarian assistance.

1. Issues highlighted in the work of the General Assembly

9. The present section provides illustrative examples of gender-equality issues which were addressed across agenda items.

(a) Violence against women

10. During the past year, violence against women was widely discussed in the General Assembly. Several reports and resolutions covering a broad range of issues, including trafficking in women and girls, the rights of the child, the responsibility to protect, and regional and country-specific situations, emphasized the need to eliminate violence against women.[3]

11. Under the agenda item entitled "Advancement of women", the report on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) stressed the fact that comprehensive measures to secure gender equality and protect women's human rights, in accordance with the international human rights framework, were necessary for the effective prevention and elimination of all

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[2] The gender-equality content of reports of the Secretary-General and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its sixty-third session, as available in the United Nations Official Document System up to mid-June 2009, was reviewed.

[3] See for example, A/63/133, A/63/214, A/63/215, A/63/216, A/63/220, A/63/222, A/63/367, A/63/677, A/63/785-S/2009/158, A/63/702 and General Assembly resolutions 63/166, 63/181, 63/190 and 63/241.

forms of violence against women. The Assembly adopted key resolutions on violence against women under that agenda item. In its resolution 63/155 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly urged States to use best practices in the fields of legislation, prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance and rehabilitation to end impunity and the culture of tolerance towards violence against women. In resolution 63/156 on trafficking in women and girls, the Assembly further emphasized the need for prevention, protection and support for trafficked victims. The need to address violence against women as one of the underlying causes of obstetric fistula, and to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to ending the problem, was highlighted in resolution 63/158 on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula.

12. Enhanced attention was given to efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. In the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/63/785-S/2009/158) it was recognized that addressing sexual violence was an important system-wide priority of the United Nations. This was also emphasized in the report of the Security Council, covering the period from 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008 (Supplement No. 2 (A/63/2)), which highlighted the ministerial-level debate of the Security Council on women, peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, of June 2008, which culminated in the adoption of Council resolution 1820 (2008). The resolution called for concrete actions by Member States (including troop-contributing and police-contributing countries), all parties to armed conflict, the Secretary-General, United Nations entities, regional and subregional bodies, and financial institutions, to eliminate sexual violence and address its impacts. In resolution 63/139 on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, Member States were urged to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and to ensure that their laws and institutions are adequate to prevent, promptly investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence. The Assembly called upon States, the United Nations and all relevant humanitarian organizations to improve coordination, harmonize response and strengthen capacity in support services to victims of such violence.

13. Under the agenda items linked to crime prevention and human rights, the Assembly also paid particular attention to the elimination of violence against women and trafficking in women and children.[4] In resolution 63/194 on improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons, the General Assembly urged Member States to consider taking measures to ratify or accede to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Assembly recognized the importance of comparable data disaggregated by types of trafficking in persons, sex and age, as well as of strengthening national capacity for gathering, analysing and reporting of such data.

14. The report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities (A/63/226) drew attention to a number of priorities, including the rule of law response to continuing impunity for widespread sexual violence in armed conflicts and high levels of unpunished sexual and domestic violence. The corresponding General Assembly resolution 63/128 on the rule of law at the national and international levels did not contain explicit references to gender-

[4] See, for example, A/63/90, A/63/99 and General Assembly resolution 63/195.

sensitive rule of law activities, but the Assembly took note of paragraph 77 (c) of the report, in which the United Nations system was requested to further strengthen its rule of law capacities, with the support of Member States, in the areas of governance, management and oversight; crime prevention; access to justice, legal empowerment and informal justice systems; sexual and gender-based violence; housing, land and property; and Constitution-making. In its resolution 63/195 on strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, the Assembly emphasized that its resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women had considerable implications for the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme and its activities.

15. The report on the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (A/63/220) stressed the need to ensure that mechanisms and targeted efforts are put in place to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women. In resolution 63/166 on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the General Assembly called upon all States to adopt a gender-sensitive approach in the fight against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, paying special attention to violence against women and girls. In resolution 63/181 on elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief, the General Assembly invited all actors to address, in the context of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the situations of violence and discrimination that affect many women as well as other individuals on the grounds of or in the name of religion or belief or in accordance with cultural or traditional practices.

16. Action taken at the regional level to eliminate violence against women was also highlighted. For example, the Assembly noted with appreciation the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence, in its resolution 63/14 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, and called for increased cooperation regarding all forms of violence against women, in the framework of the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women.

(b) Gender equality and decent work

17. Different aspects of gender equality and decent work were addressed across agenda items of the General Assembly, including: gender discrimination in labour markets; women's role in agriculture; the distribution of paid and unpaid work; the situation of women domestic workers; gender-sensitive measures to eliminate child labour; the role of microfinance; and specific challenges faced by women with disabilities.[5]

18. Under the agenda item "Social development", the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/63/133) noted that, while several positive developments in women's participation in labour markets had occurred in the last decade, numerous challenges remained. A large number of women still work without pay; women are overrepresented in the

[5] See, for example, A/63/77-E/2008/61, A/63/130, A/63/159, A/63/179, A/63/183, A/63/190, A/63/287, A/63/304, A/63/324, A/63/526 and resolutions 63/225, 63/230, 63/231, 63/239 and 63/241.

informal sector and in non-standard jobs; women continue to earn less than men on average; and, in general, women's workloads are higher than men's due to more hours spent in unpaid work. In its corresponding resolution, 63/152, the General Assembly stressed that policies and strategies to achieve full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality. It also stressed the need to allocate adequate resources for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, including unequal access to labour market participation and wage inequalities, as well as reconciliation of work and private life for both women and men.

19. The report of the Secretary-General on impact of globalization on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (A/63/333) also noted that significant gender differences and disparities prevailed with respect to economic participation, such as women's concentration in low-skill, low-income jobs and the gender wage gap. The scarcity of wage data disaggregated by sex, however, makes a complete assessment of gender wage gaps difficult. The report stressed that an expansion of the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators in national and international monitoring frameworks is needed to accurately measure, assess and track the impact of globalization on gender equality. In the corresponding resolution 63/222, the Assembly resolved to make the goals of full employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of relevant national and international policies, as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It noted that particular attention must be given in the context of globalization, to the objective of protecting, promoting and enhancing the rights and welfare of women and girls, as stated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

20. Similarly, in its resolution 63/199 on the International Labour Organization Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the General Assembly resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of relevant national and international policies, including poverty reduction strategies. The Assembly called for the implementation of the International Labour Organization Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which considers gender equality and non-discrimination as cross-cutting issues in the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda (A/63/538-E/2009/4, annex).

(c) Attention to gender equality in peace, security and humanitarian emergency efforts

21. The significance of mainstreaming gender equality into peace, security and humanitarian assistance efforts was expressed in documents before, and outcomes of, the General Assembly, in addition to the attention paid to violence against women mentioned earlier. The report on the Central Emergency Response Fund (A/63/348), which presented the findings of the independent review of the Fund, stressed the need to pay more attention to gender-sensitive programming. In its resolution 63/137 on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, the Assembly urged Governments and the United Nations system to integrate a gender perspective in planning for disaster preparedness and responding to natural disasters, and in

implementing recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, and to provide every opportunity for women to take a full, active and equal role in all phases of disaster management.

22. The report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/63/81-E/2008/71) drew attention to an independent review conducted in 2007 of the cluster approach implemented in Myanmar following cyclone Nargis, which, inter alia, identified the need to better mainstream gender perspectives. It also discussed the 2007 Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender policy review, which indicated that progress had been achieved, including through the deployment of gender advisers to the field as part of a newly created gender-capacity roster to support gender mainstreaming in country-level programming. The policy review had called for enhanced coordination among humanitarian actors in gender equality programming and the equal participation of women, girls, boys and men in all aspects of humanitarian response. The report emphasized that it was imperative that humanitarian actors report sex- and age-disaggregated data to better inform decision-making, and that accountability mechanisms for mainstreaming gender equality be strengthened.[6]

23. Similarly, the importance of the technical guidance and support provided by gender advisers, gender specialists and integrated operational teams on cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality, was highlighted in the reports on strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to manage and sustain peacekeeping operations (A/63/702 and Corr.1) and on implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/63/615). While its corresponding resolution 63/280 did not include explicit gender-specific references, the General Assembly endorsed the proposals, recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee, which included specific recommendations on gender equality and peacekeeping. Within peacekeeping operations, dedicated attention to upholding organizational objectives, such as gender balance, resulted in a 28 per cent increase in the appointment of women in leadership positions since July 2007. The report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/63/212) drew attention to the partnership of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the African Union's Gender Division to work on capacity-building for human rights, gender mainstreaming and monitoring within the African Union; strengthening women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations; and mobilizing women's effective participation through the African Union Economic and Social Council and the Pan-African Parliament.

24. Several reports related to budgetary matters and programme performance of peacekeeping operations, special political missions and peacebuilding support offices, included information, although to varying degrees, on work to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, and to improve gender balance of personnel.[7] Activities mentioned in reports included advisory services and technical support to different stakeholders, workshops and training initiatives, and awareness-

[6] See also paragraph 48, which discusses A/63/81-E/2008/71 and corresponding outcomes.

[7] See, for example, A/63/517, A/63/520, A/63/562, A/63/563, A/63/569, A/63/588, A/63/610, A/63/709, A/63/714, A/63/717, A/63/724, A/63/734, A/63/767, A/63/806, A/63/817 and addendums 3 to 6 of A/63/346.

raising events. Some work programmes included gender-specific indicators to measure performance, such as an increased representation of women in decision-making and an increased number of people trained on women's rights, gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

25. In the area of disarmament, some activities supporting gender equality and empowerment of women, including in follow-up to the United Nations integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards and related training initiatives, were highlighted in reports of the Secretary-General,[8] but outcomes of the General Assembly on disarmament did not include any references to gender equality.

2. Attention to gender equality in international high-level events

26. The present section reviews the attention to gender equality issues in three selected high-level events during the past year.

(a) High-level meeting on Africa's development needs, 22 September 2008

27. Documentation before the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs,[9] included the report on Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward (A/63/130) and the recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group. Those documents raised a number of issues related to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Notably, the MDG Africa Steering Group expressed concern that Millennium Development Goal 5 and its target on reducing maternal mortality would not be met by 2015. The report on Africa's development needs drew attention to commitments of African Governments to gender equality and empowerment of women, including in the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of 2004 and the ongoing formulation of the African Union gender policy. It noted, however, that only 23 countries had ratified the 2003 Protocol. While the Solemn Declaration committed States to include the participation and representation of women in peacekeeping processes, implementation of the commitment had been limited.

28. In connection with the high-level meeting, the Africa Women's Forum[10] reaffirmed commitments to women's human rights and urged the international community to prioritize actions and resources for meeting those commitments; discussed challenges in implementation and accountability; and proposed a set of actionable recommendations to accelerate implementation of, and strengthen accountability for, gender equality and women's human rights. Panellists stressed the importance of Government action to facilitate women's political engagement and

[8] See, for example, A/63/158 and Add.1, A/63/228 and Corr.1-S/2008/531 and Corr.1.

[9] www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/adnhlm.shtml.

[10] The Africa Women's Forum represents an inter-agency effort of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Volunteers, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Economic Commission for Africa. It was co-hosted by the Governments of Iceland, Liberia and Rwanda, and the European Commission and the African Union. More information is available at: www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/adn/africawomenforum.pdf.

leadership in the formulation of policy and programmes at national and regional levels.

29. The high-level meeting on Africa's development needs concluded with the adoption of a political declaration (General Assembly resolution 63/1), in which the Assembly reaffirmed the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women. While violence against women had not been raised in the main report before the meeting, the political declaration noted with concern that violence against women and children continues, and resolved to ensure the strict universal adherence to international norms regarding violence against women and girls.

(b) High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, 25 September 2008

30. The background note prepared by the Secretariat for the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals pointed out that global progress in empowering women and affording them equal access to full and productive employment and economic resources had been modest.[11] It stressed that the achievement of Goal 3 depended not only on the extent to which specific targets — such as increasing women's political empowerment, literacy rates and participation in non-agricultural wage employment — were addressed, but also on the extent to which the actions taken to achieve the other Goals were designed to promote the equality of women and men. Among the Millennium Development Goals, least progress had been made in reducing maternal mortality (Goal 5).

31. In the three thematic round tables on poverty and hunger, education and health, and environmental sustainability, respectively, gender equality received limited attention, with some notable exceptions. Some speakers emphasized the links between Goal 3 and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. For example, the lack of water and sanitation was identified as a key challenge to be addressed in order to meet the goals of reducing child and maternal mortality and ensuring girls' equal access to education. More attention was given to gender equality in parallel partnership events, in which, for example, efforts to integrate gender perspectives into employment programmes for both formal and informal economies, lack of adequate representation of women in decision-making, the need to increase resource allocations, and the need for data disaggregated by sex to inform policy decisions, were discussed. The Government of Denmark, for example, promoted the Global Millennium Development Goal 3 Champion Torch Campaign.

32. The high-level event culminated in new commitments and initiatives by Member States to accelerate progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Only a limited number of the commitments made were, however, directly targeted at Goal 3 or at efforts to improve women's access to health, including reproductive health (Goal 5).

(c) Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008

33. The importance of gender equality for development was raised in preparatory processes in 2007-2008 and at the Doha Conference held in December 2008. In the plenary meetings, participants emphasized that gender equality and empowerment of

[11] www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/.

women were essential for economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and development effectiveness (A/CONF.212/6/Add.1).

34. The Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/239, reaffirmed commitments to eliminate gender-based discrimination in all forms, including in the labour market and in financial markets, as well as in the ownership of assets and property rights. Global leaders resolved to promote women's rights, including their economic empowerment; effectively mainstream gender perspectives in law reforms, business support services and economic programmes; and give women full and equal access to economic resources. They agreed to promote and reinforce capacity-building of States and other stakeholders in gender-responsive public management, including, but not limited to, gender-responsive budgeting.

35. A number of side events at the Conference specifically addressed gender-equality aspects of financing for development, including the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on gender equality. Norway, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, for example, organized a high-level event on "Mobilizing women's potential for economic growth and development: Opportunities and challenges in times of financial crisis". Panellists agreed that the current financial crisis presented an additional challenge for reaching Millennium Development Goal 3 but also provided an opportunity to integrate a gender perspective into measures to stabilize financial markets and revive economic growth.[12]

3. Subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly

(a) Peacebuilding Commission

36. The report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its second session (A/63/92-S/2008/417) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/63/218 and Corr.1-S/2008/522 and Corr.1) provided general references to efforts to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding, including in the context of the development of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi, elections in Sierra Leone, and promotion of gender equality in law.

37. During the reporting period,[13] the Security Council referred the Central African Republic to the Peacebuilding Commission, making it the fourth country on the agenda of the Commission, after Burundi, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. The strategic frameworks for peacebuilding of these countries, including the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone, have included important commitments on women's human rights and gender equality, including on: women's involvement in the promotion of peace; access to decision-making processes, including electoral processes (as voters and candidates); access to resources, including land; and elimination of violence against women and access to justice. The recent Strategic Framework on Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic, adopted on 6 May 2009, for example, includes commitments on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence; training for security forces on respect for human rights; identifying and supporting victims of violence, particularly women; and bringing perpetrators to justice.[13]

[12] www.unece.org/oes/gender/mobilising_women_potential_side_event.html.

[13] Additional information received from the Peacebuilding Support Office.

38. In 2008, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia and Sierra Leone received funding from the Peacebuilding Fund. According to a review of the projects receiving funding, 6 per cent of funding (US$ 6.4 million) was allocated to projects designed specifically for women with an additional 9 per cent (US$ 8 million) allocated to projects with explicit gender-equality components and/or women beneficiaries.[13]

39. On 28 January 2009, the Peacebuilding Support Office, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNIFEM, convened a consultation on promoting gender equality in recovery and peacebuilding, which brought together experts, decision makers and women peace leaders from Burundi, Sierra Leone and Uganda to formulate recommendations on promoting gender equality as an input to the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881-S/2009/304). Some issues raised during the consultation were reflected in the report, such as the need for increased attention to the needs and priorities of women and girls in post-conflict situations. The report also addressed deficits in funding for women's empowerment and gender-equality activities.[13]

(b) Human Rights Council

40. In resolution 6/30 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, the Human Rights Council decided to include in its programme of work an annual full-day meeting to discuss the human rights of women, including measures by States and other stakeholders to address human rights violations. The first meeting was held during the Council's eighth session in June 2008, with a focus on violence against women. In the same resolution, the Council requested all special procedures[14] and other human rights mechanisms to regularly and systematically integrate a gender perspective into the implementation of their mandates, including when examining the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination against women, and to include in their reports information on, and qualitative analysis of, human rights of women and girls.

41. The Human Rights Council, at its eighth and ninth sessions, addressed the human rights of women and promotion of gender equality in its outcomes, including access to education for women and girls (resolution 8/4) and actions to address trafficking in persons, especially women and children (resolutions 8/12, 9/5). The Council urged States to adopt a gender-sensitive approach in the fight against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, paying special attention to violence against women (resolution 8/8). It encouraged all States to apply a gender perspective in developing international migration policies and programmes, in order to adopt the necessary measures to better protect women and girls against dangers and abuse during migration (resolution 9/5).

42. The Council also recognized the important role played by women's organizations in the realization of transitional justice goals and stressed the importance of ensuring the representation of women in transitional justice mechanisms and the integration of gender perspectives in their mandates. The Council emphasized the need to provide gender-sensitive human rights training in the context of transitional justice to all relevant national actors, including police,

[14] See Council resolutions 8/3, 8/4, 8/6, 8/7, 8/8, 8/10, 8/11 and 8/12.

military, intelligence and security services, prosecution staff and members of the judiciary, in dealing with victims of human rights violations, particularly women and girls (resolution 9/10).

43. Council resolutions 5/1 and 6/30 mandated the universal periodic review mechanism to fully integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of the review process. In resolution 6/30, the Council urged all stakeholders to take into full account both the rights of women and a gender perspective and encouraged States to prepare their national information through broad consultation with all relevant stakeholders at the national level. During the last three sessions of the universal periodic review, the outcome reports addressed a number of areas of relevance, including the need for legislation to protect women's human rights, adequate financing of initiatives on women's rights, and measures to enhance women's participation in social, economic and political fields of society.

B. Economic and Social Council

1. 2008 session of the Economic and Social Council

44. At its 2008 high-level segment and annual ministerial review, the Economic and Social Council addressed several issues of relevance to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including gender-based discrimination, women's access to resources, and the situation of rural women and women farmers.[15] The Ministerial Declaration on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development reaffirmed commitments to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and to identifying and accelerating concrete actions towards that end. It emphasized, inter alia, the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in areas such as water, sanitation, human settlements and good governance, and of enhancing access of poor rural women and men to productive assets (A/63/3, chap. IV (F)).

45. Gender equality was addressed at the first biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum held within the framework of the high-level segment. The report of the Secretary-General on trends and progress in international development cooperation (E/2008/69) expressed concern that the current aid effectiveness framework is not sufficiently responsive to development issues that are cross-cutting, notably human rights, gender equality and the environment. It pointed out that, while commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment are frequently mentioned, including in poverty reduction strategy papers, they are rarely costed. At the Forum, six high-level round tables were organized. Participants in round table 6, "Aid effectiveness agenda — towards consensus at Accra and Doha", stressed the need for donors and programme countries to monitor and comply with the commitments made through United Nations processes and human rights conventions, including those specifically addressing women's rights, and referred to the use of gender-sensitive indicators, as well as gender-responsive budgeting.[16]

46. Under the coordination segment, both reports reviewed by the Council[17] contained references to gender equality and empowerment of women, including

[15] See, for example, E/2008/12 and E/2008/68.

[16] www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/DCF_pub_18_Sept.pdf.

[17] E/2008/21, A/63/83-E/2008/77.

examples of work undertaken by the functional commissions. One of the four panel discussions held during the coordination segment focused on the role of the Economic and Social Council in addressing violence against women, in response to General Assembly resolution 61/143. At the panel discussion, participants agreed that the Council and its functional commissions play a critical role in creating political will to end violence against women.[18] A number of key issues were raised in the reports and panel discussions, such as women's central role in development; the importance of access to full and productive employment and decent work for women and men; the need for gender-sensitive microcredit schemes; and the importance of eliminating violence against women. However, neither of the two resolutions adopted by the Council, 2008/28 and 2008/29, included references to those issues.

47. Under the operational activities segment, reports reviewed[19] drew attention to the substantive support provided by the United Nations system at the country level on gender mainstreaming, including through gender theme groups. The report on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (E/2008/49) highlighted the policy and strategy for gender mainstreaming of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and United Nations Development Group guidance to United Nations country teams in that area. It also noted the intention of the Development Group and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality to review current guidelines on gender mainstreaming, and that United Nations country teams had begun using a scorecard on performance indicators on gender equality and women's empowerment. The corresponding resolution 2008/2 adopted by the Council contained no explicit references to gender equality, although the Council identified specific areas for follow-up which are of relevance to gender equality.

48. Under its humanitarian affairs segment, both documentation before,[20] and outcomes of, the Council contained gender perspectives. Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/36 on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system reiterated the need to mainstream a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance in a comprehensive and consistent manner, taking note of the updated policy of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on gender equality in humanitarian action. In particular, the Council requested Member States, United Nations organizations and other relevant actors to ensure that all aspects of humanitarian responses address the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys, including through the improved collection, analysis and reporting of data disaggregated by sex and age. The Council urged Member States to continue to prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence, including sexual violence in humanitarian emergencies, and called upon Member States and relevant organizations to strengthen support services to victims of such violence.

49. Under its general segment, the Council considered the annual report on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United

[18] www.un.org/ecosoc/docs/statement08/08%20CS%20Combatting%Violence%20against%20Women.pdf.

[19] E/2008/49, E/2008/60.

[20] See A/63/81-E/2008/71.

Nations system (E/2008/53), which included a set of recommendations to further strengthen implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy. In response to the report, the Council adopted resolution 2008/34, in which it requested that the United Nations system, inter alia, ensure that programmes, plans and budgets visibly mainstream gender perspectives and allocate adequate financial and human resources for gender mainstreaming, commensurate with organizational gender equality goals. It stressed the important role played by senior management in creating an environment that actively supports gender mainstreaming. Other outcomes of the Council under this segment also highlighted gender equality concerns. For example, in its resolution 2008/37 on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the Council expressed its deep concern that an increasing number of people are at risk of malnutrition, in particular children and women, and recognized that there are important linkages between development, poverty eradication and gender equality. In its resolution 2008/10 on the ad hoc advisory group in Haiti, the Council noted progress made by the Government of Haiti on gender equality, and stressed the importance of gender equality as a necessary dimension of any strategy for development.

2. Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

50. Most of the functional commissions, in addition to the Commission on the Status of Women, addressed gender perspectives, to some extent, in their deliberations and in some of their outcomes. Illustrative examples are highlighted below.

51. During its forty-sixth session, the Commission for Social Development, in its resolution on promoting full employment and decent work for all (Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/18), stressed that policies and strategies to achieve full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and better possibilities for all to reconcile work and family life. The Council encouraged Governments, the private sector and civil society to promote and protect the rights of women workers, to take action to remove structural and legal barriers as well as stereotypical attitudes towards gender equality at work, and to initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. The efforts made by African countries and regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, to mainstream a gender perspective and the empowerment of women in the implementation of the New Partnership were welcomed in the Council's resolution on social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (2008/17).

52. During its thirty-ninth session, the Statistical Commission held a joint dialogue with the Commission on the Status of Women on indicators to measure violence against women. Such indicators, and the data collected to measure progress, would increase the visibility of the scope of violence against women and of trends within and between countries, and significantly enhance States' capacity to develop effective policies and other measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. In its decision 39/116, the Statistical Commission approved the formation of a Friends of the Chair group to conduct an in-depth technical review of proposed indicators to measure violence against women.

53. At its seventeenth session, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice paid particular attention to the issue of violence against women. In the thematic discussion on aspects of violence against women that pertain directly to the Commission, participants focused on several topics, including: successful practices to prevent violence against women; criminal justice responses to violence against women, including against women migrant workers; and effective strategies and practices to support victims of violence, including victims of sexual assault. The Commission adopted decision 17/1 on strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women and girls and requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to convene, in collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, an intergovernmental group of experts to review and update, as appropriate, the Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.[21]

54. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development, in its resolution on assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, adopted at its eleventh session (Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/3), noted that the gender divide still persists with regard to access to the Internet and information and communications technologies in both developed and developing countries and recommended that all States strive for gender equality in access.

55. The report of the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (review session) (E/2008/29-E/CN.17/2008/17) stressed that gender equality had been a prominent cross-cutting issue for its work. The Commission identified gender inequality as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction. It noted that women working in the agricultural sector in particular tended to be invisible workers, and most of the income from agricultural activities went to men. Women farmers lacked training, access to credit, access to markets and market chains.

56. At its forty-first session, the Commission on Population and Development adopted resolution 2008/1 on population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development, which emphasized the importance of establishing and funding active labour market policies devoted to the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, the creation of more and better jobs for women, and their inclusion in social protection. The Commission urged Governments to promote healthy living in both rural and urban areas, including sexual and reproductive health, in particular the improvement of maternal, child and adolescent health, and efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality.

III. Fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women

57. The following section provides illustrative examples of ways in which the outcome of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women, has been utilized within

[21] General Assembly resolution 52/86, annex.

the United Nations system, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9.

58. At its fifty-second session, the Commission considered for the first time "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women" as its priority theme, which generated considerable interest and activities, including in the context of the financing for development process. The work of the Commission on this theme contributed substantively to other intergovernmental processes and discussions within the United Nations system. It also stimulated a range of global, regional and national events in connection with the 2008 United Nations observance of International Women's Day, which focused on "Investing in Women and Girls".[22]

59. The agreed conclusions on "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women" adopted by the Commission (E/2008/27-E/CN.6/2008/11) noted the growing body of evidence that investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth and that increasing women's economic empowerment was central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to the eradication of poverty. The Commission urged Governments to undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the rights to inheritance and ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

60. The agreed conclusions were transmitted to the General Assembly as an input into the preparations for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha. This contributed to stronger commitments on gender equality in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (see also paras. 33-35 above).

61. In follow-up to the priority theme, several United Nations entities[23] undertook outreach activities, provided advisory services and carried out gender sensitive research on a range of issues linked to financing for gender equality, in areas such as macroeconomic policy; microfinance; globalization; taxation and participation in economic policymaking. UNIFEM, for example, worked throughout 2008 to support engagement of gender-equality advocates in the financing for development processes and to strengthen cooperation with Ministries of Planning and Finance. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees expanded the reach of its Women Leading for Livelihoods Initiative, which seeks to enhance the economic empowerment of women.

62. A number of entities, including the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), provided advisory services and technical

[22] See: www.un.org/events/women/iwd/2008/.

[23] Inputs were received from: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. See also E/2009/71.

assistance to Member States on gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and data collection. For example, UNDP launched a capacity development programme in Africa to support the development of a critical mass of economic policymakers and practitioners with skills to analyse policies and budgets from a gender perspective. Several entities, including UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), reported on activities to strengthen internal capacity, including through training, to incorporate gender perspectives into policy and programming, including for sector budget and support. WFP also provided a specific budget to support the establishment of the Gender Service at headquarters and the gender policy evaluation in 2008. In planning for the biennium 2010-2011, UNRWA introduced the use of sex-disaggregated data and results-based budgeting.

63. In line with resolution WHA 60.25 adopted by the World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization developed strategic means to enhance investments in women and girls and tools to assess the integration of human rights and gender equality perspectives in sector-wide approaches. UNAIDS increased its advocacy with international development partners and national Governments on the need for increased financing for gender equality within the AIDS response. UNDP expanded its Atlas pilots to 16 countries in 2008 to refine the scoring methodology for tracking gender-related resources. It is expected that a system-wide methodology will be in place in 2009 to track all allocations and investments on gender mainstreaming, as well as women's empowerment.

64. To promote the exchange of information, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) developed a Web-based information portal on the economics of gender equality. The portal includes case studies of good practice in gender mainstreaming in economic policies across ECE member countries and provides links to toolkits, manuals and guidelines on gender mainstreaming, including in support of the implementation of the agreed conclusions.

65. Efforts to analyse and address the gender dimensions of the global financial and economic crisis have also been made. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and UNIFEM supported Mexico's National Institute for Women in organizing an international seminar on "Analysis of the economic and financial crisis from a gender perspective: understanding its impact on poverty and women's work", to promote dialogue between Government officials and academic experts. A special feature on the gender perspectives of the financial crisis was developed on the United Nations inter-agency website WomenWatch, providing links to a range of United Nations resources.[24] Links to resources are also available through the website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.[25]

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

66. **The review of documentation before, and outcomes of, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council indicated that attention to gender equality was incorporated across a wide range of policy areas, although**

[24] See: www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/financialcrisis.

[25] See: www.un.org/esa/desa/financialcrisis/gender.

coverage was not systematic and content varied widely in terms of depth of attention. Systematic attention to the gender dimensions of all issues under consideration by the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, including in outcomes, is critical to move the global policy agenda on gender equality forward and guide implementation.

67. A number of important issues concerning gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls were addressed by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies during the past year and contributed to a strengthening of the global policy framework on gender equality. The issue most consistently addressed across different agenda items was violence against women, including trafficking in women and girls. Other areas, in which attention was more systematically drawn to gender equality and women's rights included decent work, and peace, security and humanitarian assistance. Intergovernmental bodies expressed concern that, owing to discrimination and gender inequality, women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, hunger, food insecurity, disasters and crisis.

68. The need to improve mainstreaming of gender equality in policy development, programme planning and monitoring and reporting was stressed across agenda items, including through improved use of sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive indicators and gender-responsive budgeting.

69. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, concerns were raised about the limited progress made on Goal 5. It was also noted that progress on Goal 3 is dependent on the extent to which the actions taken to achieve the other Millennium Development Goals are designed to promote the equality of women and men. A review proposed for 2010 to assess progress towards the targets and goals of the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015 provides an opportunity to address gaps in implementation.

70. A number of other intergovernmental events in 2010 will provide opportunities to assess progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and in accelerating actions to address outstanding challenges. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission on the Status of Women will conduct the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, focused on overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals. The theme of the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council is "Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women". The Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum will also have a focus on gender equality. A high-level event for the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) will examine ways to further enhance implementation and accountability on women, peace and security.

71. Taking into account the critical role of intergovernmental bodies in promoting and monitoring progress in achievement of global commitments on

gender equality, including through implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, the General Assembly may wish to:

(a) Request that reports submitted to the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies facilitate gender-sensitive policy development, through qualitative gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data, and concrete recommendations for further action;

(b) Ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of all United Nations conferences, summits and high-level meetings, including in documentation, interactive events and outcomes;

(c) Request the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions to increase efforts to mainstream gender perspectives across agenda items and in their respective follow-ups to United Nations conferences and summits, including through the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum;

(d) Encourage increased efforts to enhance accountability for implementation of gender-equality commitments at the international, regional and national levels, including by improved monitoring and reporting on progress in relation to policies, strategies, resource allocations and programmes;

(e) Encourage Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and other relevant actors to fully utilize the opportunities provided in intergovernmental bodies in 2010 to accelerate progress in the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, including at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council.